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My Observation Oversea



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Deposited Carl H. H. H.

My Observation Oversea

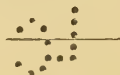


PRICE 50c

My Observation Oversea



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CARL R. LIPSCOMB

3496049, Co. C, 329 Inf., 83rd Division

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DEDICATION

To my father and mother, who were so patient and prayerful during my service Oversea, I dedicate this book.

FOREWORD

So constant has been the demand of my friends and immediate family for a written account of my trip oversea, that I have prepared the following:

No literary merit is claimed by the author for this little book. It is a chronological account of my observation oversea, while serving with the American Expeditionary Force during the late World War. As such, it is hoped that it will be accepted by the public.

I take this opportunity of publicly expressing my appreciation for Corporal John C. Fowler, who was my buddy, advisor and companion during my entire service with the U. S. Army.

Neither can I forbear mentioning the sacred memory of my "brothers-inarms," who received wounds or paid the great sacrifice over there.

INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege on my part to say a word in behalf of the author of this little book, who is a young man for whom I have the highest regards.

Mr. Carl Roscoe Lipscomb was born on a farm in Dyer County, Tenn., July 7, 1893. His father, William Franklin Lipscomb, was born in Marshall County, Tenn., June 6, 1853. His mother was Miss Effie Emeline Patterson, and was born in McNairy County, Tenn., July 23, 1855. They were married Jan. 4, 1877, and have had six children born to gladden their hearts, three boys and three girls, five of whom are still living, one girl having died while young. Carl is the youngest of the children and is still with his parents to help make their last days their happiest.

Carl's father has always been a very active and strong man mentally and physically. In early life, he worked with the I. C. Railroad Company, but growing tired of railroad work, he invested his small savings in a farm near Dyersburg, where he has made his home ever since. He is a great leader among men, especially religiously. He is a strong Methodist and never ashamed or

afraid to let the world know that he is a Christian. Being such a character himself, he seems to have instilled into his children some of the same traits.

Hence, we find Carl to be a strong, fearless and conscientious young man with very profound respect for the right and a strong hatred for what he deems wrong. Having been born and reared on the farm, he has always been in close touch with nature and knows the hardships of life as found in the country and at the same time, he knows the beauties, the purity and the strength giving power of life in the country.

His home being on the edge of the Forked Deer River bottom, he spent many of his boyhood days in hunting and fishing, nor did he neglect the old swimming hole.

After crops were laid by, and during three or four months in the winter, he attended school at Sorrell's Chapel until he had finished about the seventh grade. Then in 1912, he entered F. U. College, now Unionville High School. However, in just a few weeks after he entered, the school had to close on account an epidemic of smallpox and meningitis. The next year he again entered and remained until he had finished

high school, also expression.

As one of his teachers, I can say he was a good conscientious and obedient student. He was full of ambition and bouyant with hope of going on in his school work until he had finished a college education. But war clouds began to hover over our country and they grew thicker and darker until at last we were forced into what Sherman called "Hell." When the war broke out, Carl held himself in readiness to answer his country's call. Some of his friends urged him to volunteer, but he said, "When Uncle Sam wants me he will send for me." And so he did. In June, 1918, he was drafted into the service from Dyer County, Tenn. After only a few weeks training, he was transported across the "pond" as the boys called it, where he remained until after the signing of the armistice. What he did and what he saw while in Europe, I shall leave for him to tell. Suffice to say that the war broke into his plans to go to college, but that he has not given up hope and still wants to continue his studies just as soon as possible. Here is a wish that he may climb higher and yet higher and that his little book may be the means of inspiring and helping all who read it.

J. B. HILL.

CHAPTER I

Nearly two million men have returned from oversea. Each told a story all his own. Yet in substance, they all told the same. But in the mind of the general public, there is a vague mystery as to real conditions "over there." The books and stories that have been written so far do not satisfy the mind of the public. The trip oversea, as I observed it, is what I shall attempt to express.

I assume that every one is more or less familiar with camp life in America. I shall not dwell on that. One day, however, you received a card from your son or friend, telling you not to write again to his old address, that he would be moving soon, but did not know where he was going. After that the boys disappeared as mysteriously as the children who followed the Pied Piped of Hamlin into the mountainside. The next word which came was a notice, stating that your son had arrived safely oversea. Then day and night, as you went about your work or tried to sleep, you could see your boy in the thick of the fight, or dying with a thousand others, on the battlefield.

CHAPTER II.

Crossing the Water.

In my particular case, we, the Fourth Replacement Overseas Casual Company, with thousands of others, after leaving Camp Gordon, Ga., spent about three days at Camp Merritt, N. J. There we made final preparations for the voyage oversea. On August 22, 1918, we went aboard a ferry boat at Alpine Landing, N. J., then down the Hudson River to a pier in New York. There we transferred to the steamship, *Pyrus*, an English cattle boat. We spent the night in harbor. Ten o'clock next morning found us making our way out to sea. For two days the weather was clear and hot. Then a slow rain set in; with the rain we had a cold north wind and heavy fog. For twelve days longer, under about those same conditions, we ploughed the deep blue. About daybreak Sept. 4, some one came from on deck and said, "I see land." Such expressions were often made and at first it caused no excitement. Soon shouts were heard on deck, "We see land, we see land." Then we rushed out of the hatch by hundreds. Ahead and just to the right of us, we could see the outline of what proved to be the

shore of Ireland. All shouted for joy. The day was fair and cold. All day we stood on deck. On our right the villages of Ireland were plainly visible; on our left, we could see as plainly the more barren shore of Scotland. The view of this scenery lasted most of the day. But was this a day of pleasure only? No! For early that morning the order came that every one wear life preservers until further ordered. Overhead and just in front of us were the dirigibles. Subchasers were running everywhere, like a terrier in a weed patch. Some English battleships had met us to convoy us through the North Channel, the Irish Sea and into harbor. This was the most dangerous part of our voyage. But the day passed without trouble with subs. At some hour in the early part of the night, we landed safely in the great harbor at Liverpool, England. The next morning we stepped off the ship onto foreign soil.

The North Channel is a narrow straight, only a few miles wide, which passes between Scotland and Ireland. It connects the Atlantic Ocean with the Irish Sea and it was while passing through this channel that land was visible on both sides of our ship. The water of the North

Channel was very rough, even on a clear day; it appeared to be deep. The roughness of the water, with a beautiful mountainous landscape in the background, made very beautiful scenery, indeed.

While crossing the water, we had a flotilla of about ten troop ships convoyed by four or five battleships and as many sub chasers. The ships were arranged in diamond shape. In this way, assisted through the North Channel by a few dirigibles, we crossed the Atlantic safely.

CHAPTER III.

England.

We spent only a few hours in the city of Liverpool. We entrained there and began a short trip by land. The outskirts of the city, as we saw it from the train, is very beautiful. Most of the small towns of England, which we passed through, are also very beautiful, convenient and perhaps comfortable. Small towns are thickly located along the railroad. The dwellings places of the inhabitants of these small towns are sometimes three or four stories high. The occupants were old men, old women and children. The people seemed to be of a low class. The atmosphere seemed to indicate very low morals. In drawing this estimation, I bear in mind, however, that the country was at war. Any one familiar with English history can easily trace the old system of Feudalism.

After riding about twelve hours over what I concluded to be the Midland Railway System, we detrained at South Hampton. This is a town located on the English Channel. The train on which we rode was made up of English passenger coaches. They were very comfortable; the coaches

have no aisle through the center, but are divided into what we called "squad coaches." Each coach is divided into several of these small divisions. The cars have running boards on each side; there is no passage from one section to the other.

It was about ten o'clock at night when we detrained at South Hampton. We spent the rest of the night at a small camp a few miles away. Our packs were not unrolled. What sleep we got was on a wooden floor without bedding. The next morning we enjoyed a very light breakfast. Near noon we started to the docks. On board a large steamer the trip across the English Channel was safely made. This was a short trip of about twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER IV.

We Reached France.

When we reached land we found ourselves at La Harve, France, in a land of wooden shoes, wheelbarrows and bicycles. We spent one night there in squad tents. Next morning we entrained again. For about thirty hours we enjoyed the great Pullman service of France. This was from La Harve to La Mans. Every overseas boy understands the Pullman service. It was simply this: a small French freight car contained forty or more men, with all their equipment and some canned goods for their eats. There were no seats or beds in the cars. Side doors were closed to prevent falling out if one should go to sleep while standing; but without the loss of one, we reached La Mans. Plenty of good eats were served at La Mans. Some of us stayed there one night. At La Mans we were "busted up" in a hurry. That is, the companies were reorganized. The new companies were then assigned to different training camps. Small training camps were located in every community all over France. We were sent out to these camps in trucks. Fifteen or more men, with packs on, stood in each

truck while in transit. At these camps we received ten days training, including a course on the rifle range, before being sent to the front. The men were then sent to the front in freight cars. There they met with various experiences.

When the companies were reorganized at La Mans, brothers and old friends who had been together since leaving home were separated. Many even lost trace of each other. At La Mans, it fell my lot to be assigned to the 83rd Division, with which I spent my entire service in France. The 83rd is said to have been the first organized unit to return home.

CHAPTER V.

How We Lived in France.

In camp we were usually very comfortably housed in "billets." All over France there were houses and barns, which had been abandoned by the French civilians. These were used by the American Government to house the soldiers. They were called "billets." The houses were also used for offices, hospitals, canteens and "Y's." Each soldier carried in his pack from one to three heavy woolen blankets. The number depended on the season of the year. When we went into quarters for a week or more, we were given bedsacks, which we filled with straw. The bedsacks, three blankets, overcoat, raincoat and shelterhalf, made a very comfortable bed for a tired, foot-worn soldier. When one was located indefinitely, he was able to secure more blankets. Some one was taken to the hospital or front most every day. Equipment of all kinds was strown around. In that way one was able to secure several blankets or other equipment.

The "billets" were badly scattered. We would often hike half mile or more in the dark to stand reveille. Reveille is the first formation in the

morning. Roll is called and a few men may be given special duty for the day. After reveille, we would get breakfast. For breakfast we would get a spud with the jacket on, some prunes, a piece of bacon, some syrup or corn meal. After we had finished eating we fell out for the duty of the day. At eleven-thirty, all work ceased until afternoon. For dinner we would have roast beef with gravy, or beef stew or beans. Each man was given two slices of bread each meal. Coffee was served with every meal.

At one o'clock, we assumed our duties again until four-thirty. Near six we stood retreat, which is the last formation of the day. Immediately following retreat, supper was served. For supper about the same eats were served as for dinner. Many times we did not get enough to eat. A few weeks prior to the signing of the armistice, troops came over so fast and in such large numbers that they could not be properly cared for. Often six hundred men were sent where only three hundred could be cared for. No doubt, however, that, with caution, the shortage of food could have been largely averted. Be that as it may, such things came into our life oversea.

CHAPTER VI.

How the French People Live.

The French people were very good to us. Their language and customs were somewhat strange to us for a while. Many of the French people are small in stature. Others are heavy-set. They have rosy cheeks, dark hair and eyes. Blondes are in the minority. Those who are tidy and well dressed are fairly good-looking, but not the American ideal of beauty.

Nearly all kinds of vegetables are grown in France. Much of the ground is sown in grass. There is also a large acreage of wheat. Grapes grow in abundance. They are used for making wine. On most farms there are a few apple trees. A large amount of hemp is grown in some sections. Most every family has a cow and goat. Most of the milk from the cow is used sweet. The goat milk is made into cheese. The natives seem to care very little for butter, although there is some on the market. Often there are a few chickens about the place. Many large rabbits are raised to be eaten. Vegetables, cheese, milk and cider, a rabbit or chicken is the principal food. The bread is often bought at the local baker shop.

If you go into a French home, before you are seated you will be given a glass of wine or cider. You must drink if you wish to remain a friend of the family. If you are sufficiently acquainted with their language, you would please them by giving a toast as you touch your glasses and begin to drink to the Allies or the French Government or their son on the front. As long as you remain in the home drinks are frequently offered. If the mother or daughter suspects that you have a cold, you will be given a cup of boiled milk with a bit of sugar in it. The French women are very industrious. They are saving and home loving. Once you gain their friendship and confidence, no favor is too great for them to render you. They are very desirous of money. Herein lies the weakness of the French people, for this leads to low morals.

The educational standard seems to be very low. School is held in the churches. The small children study a catechism of the Bible or Catholic Church. I had no occasion to see the text books used in the higher grades. There is no recreation or athletics in the school.. This, perhaps, explains why of undeveloped bodies. So far as I could learn, there is no

church in France except the Catholic Church.

A very peculiar custom of the French people is the manner in which they wash their clothes. Near the house they have a pit dug in the ground three or four feet deep. Some pits are lined with stone or concrete. The pits are full of water. After the clothes have been put into the water, they are laid on a board and scrubbed clean with a stiff brush. The clothes are not often, if ever boiled. The French women were often glad to wash for the soldiers at a very reasonable price.

CHAPTER VII.

Signing of the Armistice.

The signing of the armistice was not a surprise to us. We received a daily paper from Paris. We were also pretty well informed regarding conditions at the front. When we were sure that the armistice had been signed, a wild excitement broke out. Lanterns and flags were hung from every house. Many guns were fired and everybody was happy. After the armistice was signed we thought of coming home for the first time. From November the 11th until Christmas nothing unusual happened.

CHAPTER VIII.

Christmas in France.

On the night of December 24, a Christmas tree was given to the French school children by the American Y. M. C. A. A small pine tree was used. It was beautifully lighted and trimmed. The tree was in a small canvas house. A French interpreter made a speech in English. I am not sure that he later spoke in French. The night was clear and cold. The natives for miles around came to town for the occasion. Old people, as well as children, enjoyed the arrival of Santa Claus. The town was small and well filled with people. The sound of wooden shoes and hobnails could be heard everywhere. The American soldiers crowded in around the tree and forced many of the natives back. Otherwise the French people might have enjoyed the occasion even more. But the occasion will be long remembered, both in America and France, and I doubt if such will ever occur again.

In our particular camp nothing special was served for Christmas dinner, yet Christmas was very enjoyable, for at that time we were expecting the order that would start us on our homeward journey. We

were held in suspense, however, until December 31. It was on that day that the welcome order came.

CHAPTER IX.

New Year's Day in France.

On January 1, 1919, long before daybreak, bonfires could be seen in every direction. These fires told of the thousands of American soldiers burning the straw from their bedsacks. Near ten o'clock, we assembled and took up the only welcome hike that we ever made. Out of those thousands, not a man was missing. On a hike of about seven miles, to my knowledge, not a man fell out or complained. Late in the afternoon we entrained at Ecamoy, for Brest.

CHAPTER X.

Brest.

Brest is a port of embarkation. A large rest camp is located near there. Some American woman has truthfully said that "nothing rested there but the stomach." But this night, in the city of Brest, we had a good supper before taking up the hike to camp. Now, no doubt, you have read of the awful condition of this camp. I have been asked if half is true that has been written about the camp. It is all true. I have never read an untrue statement regarding its condition.

As has already been intimated, we entered the camp at night. We waded mud knee deep before we reached the tents we were assigned to. There was no floor in the tents. Mud and water was shoetop deep in them. We were fortunate to have "duck boards" to sleep on. All tents were not furnished with "duck boards." These boards were about six feet long and eighteen inches wide. They were made of two by four timber with one by four nailed across. They had been made for walk-ways in the camp. Two boards were laid side by side. Two men made their bed together on them. With these boards

laid in the mud, the water would soon come through our bedding and clothes. There no man dared pull off his clothes to sleep, for he had no place to put them. But we only stayed in the tents a few days. We then moved into barracks, which had electric lights, bunks and stoves in them.

We did not drill while in this camp. The camp was being built. We did our share of the building; we worked day and night. More than once we stayed on duty twenty-four hours without sleep. Rain and mud stopped no one from work, for we had both most of the time. The use of this camp was later abandoned, because of the muddy, unsanitary condition.

CHAPTER XI.

The Return Home.

The late afternoon of January 22 found us on board the steamship "Minnekahda." We were ready for the safe and happy trip over the subless sea. January 31, we entered the harbor at New York City. The grand old Statue of Liberty gave us a happy welcome back to our home land. As we entered the harbor, a committee of welcome, sent out by the mayor, met us. The band which accompanied the committee, played "Home, Sweet Home." The air was filled with joy and laughter. The thought that we had been spared through such a conflict and again permitted to glimpse the greatest city in the world brought joyous tears from the eyes of many.

We spent seven very pleasant days at Camp Mills, Long Island, New York. I was in the City of New York a few hours one Sunday. I visited the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, the Woolworth Building, Wall Street, Pennsylvania Station and Broadway at night. My observation in New York was too meager to justify an attempt at description. Everyone should see New York City and the ocean.

We had a fine trip from New York to Louisville, Ky. On this trip, of about two days and nights, we had real Pullman service. After a week's stay at Camp Zachary Taylor, we received our discharges.

CHAPTER XII.

The Service of the Y. M. C. A. Oversea.

I don't feel that I can conclude this description without mentioning the work of the Y. M. C. A. oversea. It is not my intention to eulogize the "Y" or condemn any other similar organization which served over there. Facts are sufficient. The considerate men who were oversea and are in possession of the truth, regret very much that the Y. M. C. A. has been assailed, regarding its service oversea. We are surprised how readily many of the oversea men accept and help spread the propaganda which some enemy of the Y. M. C. A. started. The Y. M. C. A. does not not claim to be a perfect organization. Nor does it claim that every person in its service was equal to the task to which he was assigned. It is only natural that through hasty recruiting many incompetent persons found their way into the ranks. Any misconduct or bad service on the part of a "Y" worker should be charged to the individual. The Y. M. C. A., as an organization, is the greatest of its kind in the world. Statistics show that at the signing of the armistice there

were “welfare workers in France”
as follows:

Young Men’s Christian Association	
Men	6,500
Women	1,350
<hr/>	
Total	7,850

Knights of Columbus	
Members	434

Salvation Army	
Men	52
Women	58
<hr/>	
Total	110

The A. E. F. appreciates the service of the Y. M. C. A. and all other welfare organizations. We are glad for the public to know the truth regarding the service of each.

CHAPTER XIII.

Conclusion.

This is the substance of my trip oversea as I observed it. Many had a greater and more thrilling experience than this. This account, I think, will pretty near meet the demand of the public, which is so anxious to know the truth regarding conditions "over there." Many details have been left out because I think them not essential. I have refrained from mentioning extreme conditions. This description was written from observation. I kept no diary as it was against military law.

I have only hinted at the moral condition. That subject is so delicate I hardly feel competent to do it justice. It is true that many of our boys found the temptations too great to overcome. Some ministers like to dwell on this fact. No person unfamiliar with the moral condition, as we found it over there, has a right to ridicule the oversea boys. Seemingly, they are hard hearted. The boys deserve great credit for the high standard of purity which they maintained and brought back under such conditions as they found oversea. Both in England and France strong drink flows as in branches. Other

temptations were equally as great. When you speak of those hard-hearted boys, don't forget that every boy who crossed the sea looked death squarely in the face. No one feared death. Mentally, they had been drawn so close that they became submissive to death. Loving tenderness from proven virtue will win them for Christ.

A ROMANCE OF MEMPHIS

The armistice had been signed. The days of construction and reconstruction had begun. They were days of construction, especially in the little city of Memphis, Tennessee. A hospital and nurses' home was to be built here. This was a great project for the little city. It called for a skilled engineer and master workmen. The engineer was William McCoy, who came from the extreme South to superintend the work.

With the superintendent came Rose McCoy, his daughter. Rose was a beautiful blonde. She was a typical young woman of the South. Within her bosom was a broad love for humanity and a desire that all men love and do justice to each other. Only a few weeks before, Rose had graduated from the female school of expression at Blue Mountain, Mississippi. It was in the early days of June when Rose came to Memphis. The great outdoor world, with its carpet of green, its green trees and the sweet fragrance from the blossoming flowers gave her great inspiration and a new hold on life.

Howard Strachn was a returned

soldier of several months' service overseas. His service among the starving Belgians increased his sympathy. While dealing with the Germans, he learned to hate and destroy that which is wrong. His suffering from hunger and the exposure of oversea life increased his love for his home and his country. As he learned of the immorals, the shame and disgrace which was found over-sea, it gave him a greater appreciation for the American girl, her beauty, her shrewdness and her virtue. Because of this experience, he placed a higher estimation on the sun-tanned face and hands which come from honest toil.

Unlike many returned soldiers, Howard did not take a long vacation after his return to America and his discharge from service, but immediately took up his former trade, which was that of a carpenter. Learning of the erection of the hospital, Howard applied for work, which was given him. Superintendent McCoy soon valued Howard very highly, and one morning called him from his work to give him some special instructions. As they stood looking over the plans, they had a very welcome intruder.

Rose enjoyed carrying her father's

lunch and seeing the great throng of men as they came from the building at the noon hour. This day Rose could not resist the temptation of going with the lunch. As she approached her father, she hardly noticed that he was busy, but ran to him, and, as she threw her arms around his neck, said:

“Oh, papa, papa, I am so happy!”

Taking in the situation, Supt. McCoy turned to Howard and said:

“Mr. Strachn, meet Rose, my daughter.”

“Glad to know you, Mr. Strachn,” was her reply.

Noticing a ladder which reached the third story, Rose turned and ran away. Her father hardly realized that she was gone until he noticed her more than half way up the ladder. As he resumed the conversation with Howard, he remarked with a friendly chuckle:

“That girl is a sight.”

This exclamation being finished, Howard returned to his work, thinking of the beautiful girl and her bravery.

David Long had recently returned from France, after a lengthy service with the 114th Engineers of the American Expeditionary Force. His return had been an eventful one. He

had just married and it seemed that a long life of happiness awaited him. Since he began work for Supt. McCoy, he had constantly worked beside Howard Strachn. Because of their experiences oversea, Howard and David could very readily appreciate each other. Out of their acquaintance arose a close friendship. David was interested in a new project which was soon to be launched and invited Howard to his home for lunch.

Mrs. Long was a charming brunette of twenty-two. She loved her husband and was ever true to him; at all times, she tried to anticipate his wishes. Any friend of her husband was always a welcome visitor to their home.

As David came for lunch, accompanied by Howard, Mrs. Long asked herself the question:

“What in the world shall I have for them to eat?”

After Howard had met Mrs. Long, he and David were seated and, while lunch was being prepared, they talked over the possibilities of the new steamboat company, which was soon to be organized.

In the estimation of their hostess, all attempts at a creditable luncheon had failed. But the meal was now

ready, and, with a bit of embarrassment, she invited the two men to the table. As the three partook of the meal together, they talked of school days and reviewed the part of the Americans in the War, which had just closed. When the luncheon was finished, Howard and Mr. Long arose from the table. Howard, turning to Mrs. Long, said:

“Mrs. Long, I certainly enjoyed your lunch.”

“Thank you, but I am afraid you didn’t,” was her reply.

Howard and David returned to their work, feeling sure that they were able to master any piece of work which might confront them.

James Ellis, a former lover of Mrs. Long, persisted in paying her visits against her wishes, but she kept the secret from her husband, because she feared a tragedy. James Ellis knew where Mr. Long was employed. He made it convenient to pass there on his way to visit Mrs. Long, to make sure that David was at his work. As he passed, James would often stop for a chat with Supt. McCoy.

Rose McCoy was a daily visitor where her father was working. It was her delight to get a saw or hammer and help. Howard Strachn was

glad for her assistance; she was very busy trying to saw some plank which Howard had marked off for her; when James Ellis inquired of Howard:

“Who is this pretty laborer?”

After an introduction to Rose, James passed on and paid his visit to Mrs. Long, thinking little of the one he had just met.

When James reached the house, Mrs. Long was fully determined that this should be his last visit to her; if it took a tragedy, then let it be! Even if she was the one to commit the tragical deed! As James entered, Mrs. Long met him at the door:

“James Ellis, do not enter my house any more. I have asked you not to come here, and it does no good. This shall be your last visit. I will tell my husband, and he will——.”

James knew that a crisis was at hand. Excitedly he hurried away.

As Howard and David were working, there was a heavy piece of timber to be raised, which was a very dangerous task. Howard insisted upon doing it alone, but David would not consent. As the timber was being raised, Howard remarked to David:

“If you have an accident, I will

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